

What Should Regional Administrators and Deputy Regional Administrators Know about EPA's Role in Disaster Recovery?

What Are EPA's Objectives for Recovery Operations?

- Build preparedness to mitigate future events – Lessen the impacts of disasters by assisting federal, state and local agencies and communities prior to disasters.
- Promote sustainable and resilient rebuilding - Use EPA's expertise to inform communities, states and federal partners about rebuilding for the long-term viability of regions' people, economies and natural ecosystems. Including:
 - Help communities adapt to climate change and incorporate green infrastructure into their resiliency planning.
 - Collaborate with other Federal agencies to leverage all Federal resources in support of sustainable and resilient recovery.
- Apply EPA's Knowledge – Provide EPA's expertise to other Federal agencies, states and communities in areas of EPA responsibility such as drinking and waste water infrastructure, brownfields, air quality, or toxic clean-ups.
- Streamline Federal Action- Work with our partner agencies to streamline Federal oversight to efficiently fulfill statutory, permitting and/or enforcement requirements in a timely fashion, including if enforcement discretion is warranted.
- Partner with EJ/Disadvantaged Communities – Actively engage vulnerable and overburdened communities so they can meaningfully participate and have their issues addressed during recovery operations and planning.



What is the Role of Response v. Recovery? Response and recovery are two separate but coordinated phases of disaster relief that may overlap. Response – which EPA carries out under the National Contingency Plan and the National Response Framework (managed by FEMA) – is typically conducted on a weeks to months timeframe for large scale events and addresses the immediate health and safety needs of the affected community. EPA can operate on its own under the NCP in certain instances, until FEMA provides funds. Recovery – EPA's responsibilities are outlined under the federal National Disaster Recovery Framework – a process that can last years, and which focuses on the long-term restoration of places and communities affected by disaster. Recovery operations involve numerous EPA programs, not only those that were involved in the response phase; many programs involved in response take on additional responsibilities during recovery. (e.g., During response, water programs may assess disaster damage, and, during recovery, begin working with states under the State Revolving Fund (SRF) program to repair water infrastructure.)

How are Federal Disaster Recovery Operations Organized on a National Level?

When EPA is involved in recovery operations, it operates within the **National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF)**. Coordinated by FEMA, the NDRF defines how Federal Agencies organize and operate to promote effective recovery and support States, Tribes and other jurisdictions affected by a disaster.

The NDRF is comprised of six Recovery Support Functions (**RSFs**) with a federal agency designated the Coordinating Agency for each one – 1) **Community Planning and Capacity Building** (FEMA), 2) **Economic Recovery Support** (DOC), 3) **Health and Social Services** (HHS), 4) **Housing** (HUD), 5) **Infrastructure Systems** (USACE), and 6) **Natural and Cultural Resources** (DOI). Although EPA is not a Coordinating Agency, it plays a significant part in recovery as a Primary Agency (significant authorities, roles, resources) or a Support Agency (specific capabilities or resources that support a primary agency in executing the mission of the RSF).

What Should a Region Consider When the Recovery Process Begins?

- (1) **Will EPA have a role in recovery?** Most disasters will not have a federal recovery effort requiring EPA involvement. In fact, FEMA has activated the NDRF for only a few events. Where the NDRF is activated, and a sustained effort is needed, EPA managers should assess the appropriate extent of involvement and resources needed to accomplish the Agency's objectives.
- (2) **Who should the Region contact for assistance?** The Region should inform the Deputy Administrator's Office immediately of significant recovery operations. The Office of Homeland Security represents EPA on FEMA's Recovery Support Function Leaders Group, and can assist with interagency coordination. The Region should consult OCFO for financial coordination. You should also contact HQ NPM programs for program-specific issues.
- (3) **How should Regional recovery programs be organized?** Regions may need to involve a wide array of HQ and regional programs and organize multi-disciplinary teams. **Regional Incident Coordination Teams** can provide initial coordination and outreach during the response phase, in coordination with National Incident Coordination Teams, but eventually regions may need to establish a **Regional Recovery Team**. These regional recovery contacts may then also want to contact each of the 6 RSFs and assign a POC for each of them. (e.g. the Water Program typically works on Infrastructure Systems (RSF #5) and the Sustainability Program works with Community Planning/Capacity Building and Housing (RSFs #1 and 4)).

What EPA Programs May Be Involved in Recovery Operations? Depending on the nature of the disaster, over 20 EPA existing programs may become involved in disaster recovery operations, including:

Clean Water State Revolving Fund
Drinking Water State Revolving Fund
Global Climate Change Adaptation
Agricultural Assistance
Enforcement and Environmental Justice

ORD/Homeland Security Research
Climate Showcase Grant Program
Sustainable Communities
Air, including Indoor Air and Fuel Waivers

Brownfields
NEPA
Tribal Affairs
Energy Star

These programs and their recovery work may be funded through regular EPA appropriations (according to usual processes), FEMA Mission Assignments, or through supplemental appropriations.

How are Other Federal Programs Involved in Recovery Operations?

FEMA provides grants, through the Public Assistance (**PA**) Program for debris removal, emergency protective measures, mitigation, and the repair, replacement, or restoration of disaster-damaged, publicly owned and certain private facilities. FEMA also helps people directly through the Individual Assistance Program (**IA**), provides long term grants through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (**HMGP**) and runs the National Flood Insurance Program (**NFIP**).

HUD's Community Development Block Grant (**CDBG**) program provides annual grants on a formula basis but also provides flexible grants to help cities, counties, and States recover from Presidential-declared disasters, especially in low-income areas, subject to availability of supplemental appropriations.

The **Army Corps of Engineers** assists the Department of Homeland Security/FEMA by coordinating federal public works and engineering-related support, as well as providing technical assistance, engineering expertise, and construction management to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and/or recover from domestic incidents.

The **Department of Transportation** has several grant programs across four operating administrations (highway, railway, transit and aviation) to support recovery and resiliency projects.